

BY PHILIP SMITH

Blyth Spartans 1; Wycombe Wanderers 1

AFTER the fireworks of Blyth's last FA Trophy match against Goole their encounter with Wycombe turned out to be a damp squib.

The second round tie badly needed a vital spark but not even Wycombe's opening goal, on the half hour, could spur Spartans to their peak.

Admittedly, weeks of inactivity and a difficult pitch didn't help the players but a lot of the normal cup tie fire was missing from both sides.

Spartans equalised late in the second half and then could have snatched the game, and warmed up 2,000 frozen fans, if Peter Davies had scored with a great chance.

Spartans started the game without midfield man, David Varty, who had a slight back injury and was on the substitute's bench.

New signing, Micky Wall, lined up in the centre of the park with Mick Dagless and Alan Walker.

There didn't seem any chance of either side scoring until Blyth skipper, John Waterson, made a dreadful mistake and presented Wycombe with a goal.

While trying to make a simple clearance he missed the ball and Terry Scott had the easy task of slipping the ball past Dave Clarke.

A minute later Clarke did well to tip a dipping cross from Steve Harwick over the bar.

Hardwick was then booked for a foul tackle on Steve Carney.

Blyth came closest to scoring when Wycombe keeper, John Maskell, bravely dropped a Ron Guthrie cross. Micky Wall and Steve Carney attempted to ram the ball home before Maskell smothered it. Wall was booked for his challenge on the keeper.

In the second half Dave Clarke was hurt in a collision with Keith Houghton and a Wycombe forward. After lengthy treatment to his knee he resumed and immediately pulled off a brilliant save.

Micky Hollifield cross ricocheted off Ron Guthrie but Clarke leapt to his right to snatch the ball.

With 15 minutes left it was Clarke again who saved Blyth. Keith Houghton missed a clearance and Clarke flung himself across goal to stop Scott's shot.

Immediately afterwards Blyth drew back to level terms with a beautifully worked goal.

A David Varty throw in was knocked on by Johnson to Mick Dagless. His curling cross was brilliantly headed home by Alan Walker.



CRUNCH! Wycombe keeper, John Maskell, bravely dives on the ball as Blyth's Micky Wall, left, and Steve Carney, move in.

Ten minutes from time Johnson got clear on the left and crossed to find Davies in the box but he fired wide when he could have sealed the game.

Blyth: Clarke, Waterson, Guthrie, Walker, Houghton, T. Dixon, Davies, Wall, Johnson, S. Carney, Dagless. Sub: Varty.

Wycombe: Maskell, Hardwick, Birdseye, Mead, Phillips, Atkins, Hollifield, Judd, Kennedy, Scott. Sub: Evans.

● The replay is on Saturday, at 3 p.m.

● Once again several of Blyth's stars were under scrutiny from Football League club scouts during the Wycombe game.

Among those watching Peter Davies and Steve Carney were former Newcastle United manager, Joe Harvey, Sunderland's chief scout, Charlie Ferguson and a representative from Chelsea.